

# Return On Investment in Mat-Su Lands

*Economic benefits of trails, parks, and open space*

## Growing The Valley, Naturally

To make good decisions about the future and to sustain the character of the valley, we need to understand what our lands do for us and how valuable they are to our communities. In addition to typical stresses that come with industrial, commercial, and residential development, rapid population growth in the Mat-Su has placed added pressure on the region's open spaces. This report, *Economic Benefits of Trails, Parks and Open Space in the Mat-Su Borough*, shows that investing in trails, parks and public open space provides significant goods and services with a high return on investment.

## Two Birds, One Stone

What can a trail contribute to the economy of the Mat-Su and the health of its residents? Investing in access to outdoor activities attracts visitors that contribute to the local economy through the purchase of goods and services which in turn supports local jobs. Think of it this way: trails create access to salmon streams, which leads to fishing, which requires the purchase of licenses, gear, and services, like food, gas, and lodging, and local guiding businesses.

Walking, hiking and other physical activity helps prevent obesity, type 2 diabetes, and promotes a healthy outlook. Access to public outdoor spaces can decrease stress, aid in mental fatigue recovery, and reduce levels of depression and anxiety. Call it exercise or call it going fishing, the end result is revenue for the valley and healthier living for residents.

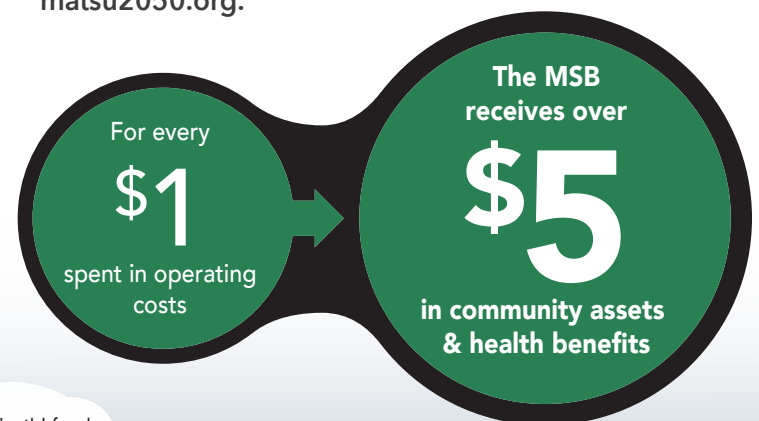
## And That's Not All

Agriculture and wild food harvests fill the larder of the locals while also adding to health benefits through the gathering as well as the eating. Open spaces such as fields act as fire buffers. Marshes provide flood protection. Proximity to open spaces, streams and lakes increases property values. Visitors attracted to the great outdoors of the Mat-Su stay the night and pay a bed tax. All of these add up to direct and indirect benefits to the Mat-Su Borough.

## Healthy, Wealthy & Wise

So, what do we get back from our trails, parks and open spaces for every dollar we put in? This report estimates that when we spend \$1 on the trail to that salmon stream, we can look forward to \$5 in return. And that's being conservative. It's something to think about the next time funding for trails, parks and public open spaces shows up on the ballot.

Read the complete report at [eartheconomics.org](http://eartheconomics.org) or [matsu2050.org](http://matsu2050.org).

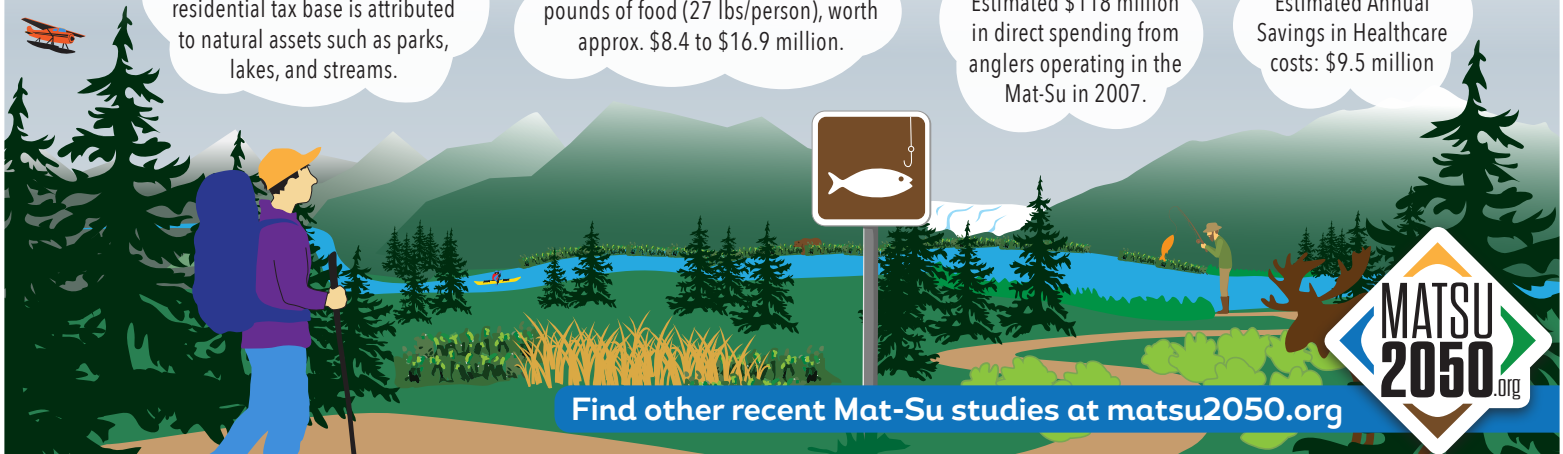


37% of the value of the Mat-Su's residential tax base is attributed to natural assets such as parks, lakes, and streams.

2010 estimate of annual wild food harvesting in Mat-Su: 2.4 million pounds of food (27 lbs/person), worth approx. \$8.4 to \$16.9 million.

Estimated \$118 million in direct spending from anglers operating in the Mat-Su in 2007.

Estimated Annual Savings in Healthcare costs: \$9.5 million



Find other recent Mat-Su studies at [matsu2050.org](http://matsu2050.org)

